DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 983 JC 890 229

AUTHOR Conklin, David
TITLE High School/College Collaboration that Promotes High School Success.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Freshman Year Experience Conference, Northeast (White Plains, NY, April 21-23, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Articulation (Education); *College Bound Students; *College School Cooperation; Community Colleges; Cooperative Programs; High Schools; High School Students; Inservice Teacher Education; Junior High Schools; *Student Recruitment; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Mercer County Community College NJ

ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, Mercer County Community College (MCCC) in Trenton, New Jersey, has developed several programs and activities to promote a closer relationship between the college and local junior high and high schools. The programs are built on the premise that well-prepared students are more likely to persist through high school and succeed in college. Some of MCCC's efforts have focused on improving communication between college and school personnel, including: (1) the creation of opportunities for local public school administrators to meet and hear experts in the field of education; (2) dinners for high school and college math, science, and English teachers held on the college campus; (3) in-service training to improve the way in which elementary science instructors teach science and increase their confidence in conducting in-class demonstrations of basic scientific principles; (4) the Distinguished Lecture Series to which high school students and their teachers are invited; (5) the Visiting Lecture Program, which involves MCCC faculty in making presentations to junior and senior high school classes; and (6) one-to-one working relationships between faculty in MCCC's Humanities Division and their counterparts at a local high school. Other activities have been undertaken to promote the academic achievement of junior and senior high school students. These include Career Days, during which practicing professionals talk to students about their fields; the distribution to junior high schools of a brochure on selecting the right high school courses to prepare for college; the publication of "Aspirations," a collection of writings by high school students; cooperative planning so that MCCC's theatrical productions can be used as an instructional resource in high school English classes; the operation of a Performing Arts High School on MCCC's campus; and an annual Teen Arts festival of workshops and competitions. (ALB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED306983

FRESHMAN YEAR EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE - NORTHEAST

WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK

APRIL 21-23, 1988

High School/College Collaborations that Promote Freshman Success

Dr. David Conklin
Dean for Acadmeic Affairs

Mercer County Community College
Trenton, New Jersey

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Conklin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

JC 890 229

Good Morning. Welcome to the session on **High School/College Collaborations that Promote Freshman Success.**

I am Dave Conklin, Dean for Academic Affairs at Mercer County Community College in New Jersey. What I would like to do today is discuss with you several programs that Mercer has initiated over the past few years to promote a closer relationship with schools within our service area. These activities range from the relatively mundane to a few that we believe are truly innovative and unique. I know that many of you are working diligently to establish cooperative relationships with your own feeder high schools, and so many of the ideas or materials we will present this morning may be familiar to you.

Some of what will be discussed may appear to be more applicable to recruitment or marketing activities than to retention and freshman success. The view we have taken at Mercer is that the better prepared students are when they come to us, the greater the likelihood that they will succeed in college. In turn, their success will encourage them to stay until graduation. When we talk about recent high school graduates being adequately prepared for college, we have come to realize that we mean more than just a mastery of basic skills competencies. We are also interested in an individual's readiness to embrace the college experience, be motivated to succeed in class, and be familiar enough with how colleges operate, to find a way through the mazes that we sometimes create.

The importance of collaborative efforts between high schools and colleges has been reinforced by such recent publications as <u>High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America</u>, by Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and <u>Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do</u>, prepared by the College Board. These are just two of the most current

attempts by educators to address issues related to academic success in high school, and how that success helps students do well when they reach college.

My presentation today will be divided into two main sections. The first will deal with cooperative efforts between our college and local school districts which relate mostly to teachers and administrators. The second section will review programs of a cooperative nature that relate mostly or almost exclusively to students.

When we began to analyze how the college could increase the interaction between our personnel and high school teachers and administrators, we concluded that the best place to start would be to have school principals and superintendents of school districts meet with us at the college. The first session we conducted was only moderately well attended. The most appreciative attendees were the parochial school administrators and elementary principals who are not normally invited to meetings with their colleagues. We also hosted a meeting of the local chapter of public school administrators, a group that is composed primarily of elementary school principals. Again, this meeting was not well attended because the group itself is not that active. Finally, the Dean for Student Services and I attended one of the monthly meetings of the superintendents of the 13 public school districts in the county to talk about things Mercer had done in the past to promote interaction between their schools and the college. The superintendents were very supportive of and receptive to our ideas, but it was clear that someone was going to have to take the initiative to institute programs that would work and make a contribution. As Ernie Boyer stated in High School, "school-college togetherness must be something more than an academic love-in." At some point, for school-college cooperation to work, it must focus on action, not machinery or process.

One of the ways we thought we could serve the local public school administrators was to provide opportunities for them to meet and hear experts in the field of education. Last fall, the college had Dr. Harold "Bud" Hodgkinson come to the campus to talk about demographic changes and their effects on education. Dr. Hodgkinson has a national reputation not only for being a good speaker, but for his ability to present information that could otherwise be considered dry in an enlightening and entertaining way. We hosted a special session for invited public school principals and superintendents to meet with Dr. Hodgkinson over lunch. This program was well received. Our guests appreciated the opportunity to hear Dr. Hodgkinson, and perhaps more importantly, to talk about education in a context separate from their day-to-day responsibilities.

Because of the positive reactions we received from this group, we had another speaker come to the campus prior to our spring semester. We invited a limited number of campus personnel, representatives from other community colleges throughout New Jersey, and an expanded list of public school administrators. The speaker was Dr. Warren Bryan Martin, who is affiliated with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and who worked with Dr. Boyer on his most recent book, College: The Undergraduate Experience. In total, 195 people attended this luncheon presentation.

For next year, Fred Heckinger, Education Editor of The New York Times will address a similar group prior to our fall semester and Ernest Boyer has made a commitment to speak on campus prior to our spring semester. The public school administrators we have talked to are anxious to hear these two speakers, and we expect a good response to our invitation to attend these presentations.

When Dr. Hodgkinson and Dr. Martin agreed to speak on campus, we informed them that they would be addressing a group that included both college and school

administrators. Although both men speak frequently throughout the country, they told us they had never addressed a mixed group like ours, and further, they appreciated the opportunity to tailor their remarks to encourage closer collaboration between the two groups. It was heartening that both speakers considered this point to be important enough to volunteer to address it during their presentations.

Beyond private, public, and parochial school administrators, we wanted to provide opportunities for our faculty to interact with high school teachers in the same discipline area in a meaningful way. Last year, we hosted a dinner for high school math and science teachers on campus. Over 75 attended, which was about two-thirds of the total number invited. After an introductory cocktail hour, we assigned the attendees to seats at tables that mixed the teachers with our faculty and also made sure that teachers from the same school did not sit together. The discussions at the tables were lively, and you could tell they were sharing experiences. The high school teachers expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to come to the campus. I think they were impressed by the fact that we took the time and effort to put together a program and invite them to have dinner with us.

This spring we will be hosting another dinner for math and science teachers. The after dinner speaker will be Dr. Charles Pyne who has been conducting innovative projects in New Jersey on the teaching of algebra to high school and college students. His approach has sparked some controversy and I am sure this year's dinner will be a memorable one for those in attendance. We have also expanded the dinner meeting concept to include English teachers, and have invited them to come to the campus on the same evening that we will be recognizing high school students for their literary accomplishments. The after dinner speaker for this group will address the issue of creativity in the writing process. One of the benefits of this informal interaction between

high school teachers and college faculty is an increased awareness of how similar our pedagogical problems are. One could sense at last year's dinner the recognition on the part of attendees that they were just talking about different sides of the same coin.

During the past year, the college has been involved in two innovative grant programs. The project involved working with elementary school teachers to improve the ways in which they teach science. The genesis of the project was the belief that elementary school teachers do not feel comfortable teaching science to their students, and as a result, do not deal with science as much as they do other subjects in their classrooms. Our goal was to help elementary school teachers improve their instruction of science by introducing them to demonstrations they could conduct in their classrooms, which use common household items. These demonstrations would illustrate basic science principles in a way that would be easily understood by elementary school students. With the assistance of a local school district, we had 122 elementary school teachers involved in this program, which entailed eight hours of instruction over a four week period. At the end of the project, we presented a Certificate of Recognition to each of the teachers who satisfactorily completed the program. It's remarkable how many complimentary comments we have received from the teachers who went through this program about the confidence they gained in their ability to teach science. They really appreciated the time and effort that we took to help them do their jobs better. The teachers especially liked the opportunity to interact with their colleagues from other schools who taught the same grade. This is not always possible when staff development programs are held in one elementary school for all of the teachers in that school. One ancillary benefit we have found from the programs that bring teachers from a number of schools together, is their belief that their knowledge and professionalism has been increased by the opportunity to interact with their colleagues from other schools.

Another activity that involves both high school teachers and their students is the invitation that we extend to them each semester to attend the college's Distinguished Lecture Series. The lecture series was developed to enhance our classroom instruction by bringing professionals and scholars to the campus to share their expertise. Believing that this opportunity can also serve as a resource for local schools, we send a list of the lectures that will take place during the semester to all of the high schools within a fifty mile radius of the college. This past fall, over 275 high school students attended one of our fourteen lectures. Many of these lectures are supported by external grants, and having high school students attend involves no cost to the college. However, those high school students who come to a lecture are introduced to the type of intellectual activity that takes place on a college campus. Our hope is that they achieve a better understanding of what it means to be a college student.

Because these lectures have worked so well for us, we thought we could offer the same service to local junior and senior high schools. As a result, we developed a Visiting Lecture Program. A brochure was prepared listing a number of topics that our faculty could present to junior and senior high school classes, either in a lecture or a demonstration format. Also, the brochure describes field trips that would be available if teachers wish to bring their classes to the campus. The reaction to the Visiting Lecture Program has been very positive. In New Jersey, high schools are mandated to present a career component in every course, and many high school teachers are using our lectures and demonstrations to meet this requirement. Again, our faculty are encouraged to help high school and junior high school students understand what will be expected of them if they plan to attend college.

To investigate ways that we could develop more <u>in-depth</u> interactions between our faculty and high school teachers, our Humanities Division has worked with one identified

high school. This effort involved having faculty from the college work closely with high school teachers on a one-to-one basis. In some cases, our faculty lectured to high school classes. In other instances, materials such as slides relating to New Jersey history were shared. The most innovative of the exchanges involved having a college faculty member lecture on the historical and sociological changes brought about by the New Jersey canal system, while touring the canal routes on a bus trip with high school students.

For the past several years, the college has conducted what we call "Career Days" for high school students. This is where we invite practicing professionals in a career field to the campus to talk with high school students who have an interest in that occupational area. In some cases, students are addressed in a large group at the beginning of the day and are then divided into smaller discussion groups. If the career field is not a large one, the students may stay together during the entire day. The college provides a free lunch for all of the students attending a Career Day, but we do not specifically push enrolling at Mercer, preferring instead to present a number of options for those students who want to attend college.

This year, over 400 high school students attended a Career Day on Architecture, another 400 came to a Career Day on Allied Health, about 80 students attended a Career Day on Aviation, and about 300 attended a Career Day on the Visual and Performing Arts. In the past, we have also had career days in technology and telecommunications. In addition to the guest speakers, we also stress to high school students the collegiate preparation required to enter the occupational area, and outline the courses they should take while in high school to prepare themselves for college.

The New Jersey Department of Higher Education has published a brochure for junior high school students and their parents that deals with selecting the right courses to

take in high school to prepare for college. The brochure was designed by a consultant to appeal to teenagers. It is meant to encourage students to seriously consider how a college education could benefit them, and at the same time to dispel false ideas such as: higher education is only for smart students; if you have a calculator, you don't need math; writing is only necessary in English courses; studying is a waste of time; and there is no time for fun if you take serious classes.

Although the Department of Higher Education printed the brochure, it did not have a mechanism for distributing it to schools or students. One copy was sent to the superintendent of schools in each district, the principal and the director of guidance in each high school. However, the brochure is really intended for seventh and eighth grade students and their parents to guide them as they select the courses the student will take beginning in ninth grade. Mercer made a commitment to distribute these brochures to eighth grade students in our county. We initially presented this idea to the superintendents of schools, and although they were receptive, they did not follow through on our suggestion. We then wrote to the principals of the junior high schools in the county. They were appreciative of our offer to provide them with these brochures. As a result of our efforts, many eighth grade students in Mercer County have received a copy of this publication about how to develop the skills necessary to be successful in college.

There are other activities that Mercer has undertaken to promote academic excellence among junior and senior high school students. For example, over the last seven years, we have published a collection of the juried writings of area high school students called Aspirations. Last year, we received over 600 student entries of which 120 were printed. The successful students were enrolled in fourteen different public, parochial and private high schools in the area. Each year, high school teachers have volunteered to participate on the panel that reviews all the entries and selects the ones that will be

included in the literary magazine. Students whose writings have been included in Aspirations are presented with a complimentary copy at a special ceremony on campus. Additional copies are sent to all of the public and school libraries in the county. Our sponsorship of this publication means that there will be a collection of student works published across school districts that would not otherwise be possible. In addition, special efforts are made to recognize the achievements of the students whose writing is good enough to be included in Aspirations, and we strongly encouraged them to continue their education beyond high school.

Another idea that we believe has been successful involves using one of our annual theatrical productions to help high school English faculty teach literature in their classes. As do many colleges, we have a fall and spring theatrical production with students and community residents serving as actors, actresses, and support personnel. This year for the first time we met with high school English teachers prior to our academic year and asked them to recommend a play that we could put on and that they could use in their classes. The concept was that they would bring their students to see the play at a special daytime performance. The teachers recommended "The Glass Menagerie" and we had 900 high school students attend three daytime productions of the play at a special rate of $3.00 per student. Our revenue from the play was increased by almost $1000.00, and the teachers involved told us that it made a real difference to their students to be able to see the play they had studied in class actually being performed.

Mercer has long recognized that we could make a contribution to local schools in the area of the arts. For the past several years, we have cooperated in running a Performing Arts High School on campus. High school students audition to be enrolled in the Performing Arts High School. If selected, they attend classes in music, dance, and theatre, for half of their school day and then return to their home high school to take

their academic course work during the other half of the day. This magnet high school for outstanding students is the only one in the county. It is amazing how quickly these students have adapted to college life. We have not had the behavior and discipline problems that many of us feared when the school was first proposed. From all indications, the graduates of the school do very well when they continue their education. I think a major reason for their success in college is the extensive exposure to college life they had while in high school. Although the students who have graduated from the school and gone on to college were talented in the arts, many of them have told us they definitely would not have gone to college, and may not have completed high school, if they had not had the additional incentive to study something they readily liked during high school.

Also in the area of the arts, we host a Teen Arts Festival each year. The festival is held over several days. Junior and senior high school students come to the campus to attend workshops presented by college faculty and local artists and they enter competitions in areas such as poetry, expository writing, speech, as well as art, dance and music. Some of the students even have an opportunity to produce a short radio or TV program. The fact that the festival is held on a college campus and involves having professionals encourage students to develop their talents and continue their work beyond high school is important. We believe this type of experience helps students do well when they eventually go to college.

Mercer is involved in numerous other projects with local schools, such as the development of articulation agreements, that we consider to be more of a recruitment effort than a cooperative activity with the schools. The programs that we have described here this morning are intended to introduce junior high school and high school students to new academic experiences and to help them prepare for college. We think there will be future dividends not only for our school, but for all of higher education, if we can help

students consider college as a viable alternative as early in their junior or senior high school careers as possible.

When we assess the presentations from national and regional retention conferences, the themes that emerge focus on helping college students make a connection with their environment. We believe this process can be facilitated if students come to college as prepared as possible to successfully adapt to the rigors of college life. This role does not have to be limited to community colleges. State supported or four-year colleges that serve a local or regional clientele can do the same or similar things.

Many of our students are the first ones in their family to go to college. For them and their parents, college can be a frightening and even threatening experience. At Mercer, we believe that the more students are made aware of the demands of college, know what its like to be on a college campus, and have the opportunity to meet with college faculty, the greater the likelihood they will feel comfortable and in charge of their destiny when they go off to college.

Many people have asked about the cost of all these programs. The initial, rhetorical response is, "How can we afford not to do these things?" In reality, the cost is not that high. Many of these activities are funded by grants. The most expensive project we are involved in is producing the literary magazine, Aspirations, each year. The dinners for high school teachers are probably the second most expensive endeavor. Even including all the costs of the meals and publications, the total expense for the college is about what we would pay to increase our admissions staff by one part-time recruiter. Put into that perspective, we have made the decision that it is more important for us to cement relationships with schools and provide new experiences for high school and junior high school students than it is to have one additional person, who would have limited

exposure, represent the college. Of course, the key to the success of these endeavors depends upon the goodwill and hard work of college faculty, high school teachers, administrators, and finally students and parents. We have found that given the right program, presented in a sincere and positive way, we can get the broad based support we need to be successful. The goal has to be to take action in establishing collaborative relationships with high schools rather than just talking about it.

ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges JUN 30 1989